A Nantucket Hermitage and Other Poems

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By

Caroline Parker Hills

Illustrated by Parker Mann

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And the boats where the billows are free
To fling up their silvery sheen.

—*A Nantucket Hermitage.*

A

NANTUCKET HERMITAGE

...AND...

OTHER POEMS

...BY...

CAROLINE PARKER HILLS.

ILLUSTRATED BY PARKER MANN.

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Prelude.

From the mainland, far away,
To the island and its spray !—
To the heaving waves that bound it,
To the wealth of waters round it.

Give to me the peace and rest
That I find on ocean's breast ;
Weary miles I've lonely travelled,
Long the thread of life unravelled.

Ope the door, and let me go
Where the restless billows flow ;
Close it then,—that I may stay
Where the ripples idly play.

How the breakers fret and chafe,
Leaping high o'er hidden reef !
Mystic voices from that shore
Surely call to me once more !

Find for me a hut,—a shell,—
By the sea, where I can dwell ;
Where the tutelary Hours
Tell of fair, Olympian bowers.

Breath of moorland, balm of pine,
How I long to make thee mine !—
There my steps shall wander free,
Bounded only by the sea !

"*Inveni portum ; spes et fortuna, valete,*
Satis me lusistis ; ludite nunc alios."

The port is found, the anchor cast,
And this dear home is gained at last ;
Fortune and Hope, a long adieu !
You've done with me, and I with you ;
Let other victims be your sport,
But me you lose ; I've found a port.

A Nantucket Hermitage.

The ivy environs the door
That leads from the porch to the hall ;
And the dog, in a doze on the floor,
Seems oblivious to footstep or call ;
In the pride of their beauty, the flowers,
Their odorous presence betray ;—
Ah ! 'tis here in the fast-fleeting hours,
One might dream the bright moments away !

The rooms in a labyrinth wind
From entrance to cellar and attic ;
Should you feel in the humor inclined,
You might easily be quite erratic ;
Here's a casement, whose each little pane
Is broidered all over with creepers ;
This window, that looks down the lane,
Gives a view of the fields and the reapers.

And yonder's the blue of the sea,
With its glint of the emerald green ;
And the boats, where the billows are free
To fling up their silvery sheen :
Ah ! the scent of the ocean so bland,
And the musical dip of the oar,
And the murmuring surf on the sand,
And the cry of the gulls on the shore !

Here's a casement whose each little pane
Is broidered all over with creepers.

—*A Nantucket Hermitage.*

How airy, up here in the loft,
  This alcove of silence and rest !—
You couch, with its pillows so soft ;
  Sweet shelter,—like down of a nest ;
Old books, with their backs of dull gold,
  All moored in an anchorage calm ;
What "pleasures of memory" they hold,
  What wit and what pathos embalm !

Heart of oak !—this old chair's pedigree,
  Was best known to one Miriam Coffin ;
Quite a turn for affairs boasted she,
  As you'll find in old chronicles, often ;
Here's a penny of Georgius the Second,
  Of seventeen-thirty the stamp ;
In how many bargains it's reckoned,
  While passing from toper to tramp !

Here are trinkets from buried Pompeii,
  Ancient lamps from the ruins of Rome ;
A sculpture, from what was once Baiæ,
  A Venus, strayed far from her home ;
Terra-cottas and bronzes ; and glass,
  With a gleam of Vesuvius' flame ;
Pressed violets that grew in the grass,—
  From the Pincian gardens they came.

This fireplace, with portrait ancestral,
  Hides a crane, in its innermost heart,
That could tell of a history festal,
  Whose actors no more take a part ;
But at night, in the gloom of the winter,
  When the driftwood lights up in blue flame,
And the sparks crackle forth from the splinter,
  They return !—cavalier and fair dame !

Weird shadows the mirrors reflect,
  And quaint garbs, as they float in the dance ;
Past days with the present connect,
  Till we thrill 'neath the power of a glance:
Whose hand touched a note, here and there,
  Of the harpsichord,—sacred to tears ?—
While the grandfather's clock on the stair,
  Re-echoed strange joys and strange fears.

Once they dreamed, but their dreaming is o'er,
  And the love, fondly lavished, is spent ;
They grieved, but they grieve now, no more ;
  Their lives in pale fragments are rent :
What is life, but a breath, but a sigh ?—
  Now a rapture ; mayhap, now a pain ;
Though we mourn when our loved ones must die,
  We dare not recall them again.

Come forth ! where the sun's parting rays
  Fall softly on garden and lawn ;
And the clouds in a roseate haze
  Foretell that he soon will be gone ;
Earth is bathed in the perfume of flowers,
  While we wait for the twilight to fall ;
For the darkness, o'er ocean, that lowers ;
  Trusting Him who hath care for us all !

The Barn Swallow.

Swallow ! perched on weather-vane,
Fresh from voyage o'er the main !—
As it veers,—now south, now west,
Sunshine lights thy silvery breast.

Brief thy moments of repose,
Restless as the wind that blows ;
Plumage ruffled, smoothing down,
Tip of wing and velvet crown.

Swift as arrow in the chase
Of the myriad insect race,
Dipping 'mid the crystal dew,
How resplendent is thy hue !

Back returning,—light as air,
Perched aloft,—above earth's care ;
Far above its grief or pain,
On the shifting weather-vane.

By the gloom of winter driven,
Heaven's own prescience to thee given,
Led thee where the orange-bloom
Fills each garden with perfume.

Swallow! perched on weather-vane.

—*The Barn-Swallow.*

Summer brings thy little skiff
Once again to island cliff;
When our festal seasons come,
Birds will flutter, bees will hum.

Spring would deem herself forlorn,
Missing thee, each eve, each morn;
In the circles of thy flight,
Dawn of day and hush of night.

When thou buildest in the grange,
Nest of such a medley strange,
Sure some fairy interweaves,
With thy beak, beneath the eaves.

Swallow! perched on weather-vane,
Harbinger of wind and rain,
Speeding on thy tireless wing,
Come, with each returning spring!

The Nymph of Nantucket Isle.

In the far away surge of the ocean,
  Reigns the Nereid of Nantucket Isle ;
Where has fled the soft charm of each motion ?
  Where has vanished her magical smile ?—
Ah ! no longer she wards from her beaches
  Icy furrows and ridges of foam ;
Oft her voice, low-complaining, beseeches
  Some relenting of merciless gnome.

Like a captive in chains,
Like the moon when she wanes,
Quite bereft of all joy,
Icy statue, so coy ;
With the frost in her hair,
Scattered pearls she doth wear ;
And the ocean's weird sigh
Still re-echoes her cry.

In monologue of tears
  The summer said farewell !—
The autumn sung its fears,
  Like toll of fairy bell.
Where fled the meadow-lark ?
  Where hid the twittering wren ?

In winter's sombre dark
They seek some hidden fen.
Beneath their tomb of snow,
Reposeful, dream the flowers,
Like youthful grace laid low
Amid its festive bowers ;

No more—no more to bless
This harshly mundane sphere !
But flowers will still caress
Our wanderings far and near ;
These hollows yet will smile,
Now pierced with winter's frown ;
The Nereid of the Isle
Will mask in summer gown ;
Enchantment this would seem,
Meet for some midnight dream !

Come Spring ! and release her !
The ice-imps freeze her ;
With accents tormenting,
All unrelenting ;
Break the enchanted spell !
She will repay thee, well.

Light wings will tremble,
Tender voices breathe ;
Birds will assemble,
Fairest blossoms wreathe ;

Little fishes to the surface come,
Sleepy honey-bees begin to hum ;
Arbutus, with rosy lip and cheek,
Undo her tangles, in a playful freak ;
Violets, purple, prodigal, outgrow,
Where so wearily has lodged the snow ;
E'en the proud surf, in play along the shore,
Will tune to melody his lion roar,
And woo the Nymph of fair Nantucket Isle,
Lulled by the magic of her summer smile.

One Parting Word.

Breathe yet one parting word, from fields Elysian,
Where thou dost wend thy far, aërial flight;
And yet, once more, to my enraptured vision,
Come, thou! as vestured with immortal light!

Still wear the smile that hovered on thy lips,
When youth and hope first garnitured thy brow;
Softly resplendent, as when downward dips
Day's mighty monarch to the depths below.

The spring returns, and early violets bloom;
They yield their fragrance, now, no more for thee!
The thrush is heard in pensive thickets gloom;
As though lamenting, thee no more to see.

Speak, dear one! from Olympian solitudes,
Where wander beings of celestial mould;
Creation's spirit there in calmness broods;
Like dove, whose wings her nestlings warm enfold.

Thou, merging with that vast, angelic throng,
Of one grand harmony becomest part;
Thy voice, attuned to their transcendent song,
In rapturous overflow, enchants each heart.

I dare not envy, while I count thy bliss,
As one who seeks admittance at the gate;
But when life's fervor, sore bereft, I miss,
Thou canst not be unmindful of my fate.

Come! in some gracious phantom of the night!
And wear the smile that once thy features wore;
Give thou some token of those realms of light;
A word, a sigh, a glance of love, once more!

The Neapolitan Dancing-Girl.

(**Francesca Cerito.*)

From Napoli's fair shores and orange-bowers I come!
Where sounds the mandolin, where voices gaily hum;
No happier heart than mine
E'er beat 'neath purple vine;
From home, in rapid flight,
I pause but for a night;
Then, back again my pathway lies,
For I'm the queen of the butterflies.

In gossamer attired—a cobweb it might be!
With them, I rise—I float—no swallow's course more free;
Or like a top, quick-spinning,
Your admiration winning;
Like some melodious rhyme,
I, with the music chime;
They cannot from their queen disguise
Their friendly help,—my butterflies!

---

*Born in Naples, 1823; made her début at the San Carlo Theatre, 1837, and though but thirteen, was received with great enthusiasm. At Milan, 1838, and afterwards in Paris and London, the same storm of applause greeted her appearance.

Around me still they flit, with glittering gems and spangles ;
With soft cerulean dyes, with bars of gold, with bangles ;
They hold me while I'm skipping,
They catch me when I'm tripping,
I'm borne upon their wings,
I tread their fairy rings ;
I hear their laughter, and their sighs,
They pine for home, my butterflies !

Soon, butterflies and queen, we'll take our onward way,
Vesuvius holds her torch and sends her flaming ray ;
I see, as in a dream,
Kind glances on me beam ;
And in the music's pause
I hear your wild applause ;
Adieu, dear friends!—tears fill my eyes,—
Fate leads afar, with my butterflies !

Where the Winds Whistle.

Down of the thistle,
  Foam of the sea,
Where the winds whistle,
  There would I be !—
Heaven, to our seeming,
  Bends ever near ;
Colours our dreaming,
  And still holds us dear.

There, where the rains pour,
  Checking the flight
Of gulls, 'mid the sea's roar,
  'Mid the sea's might ;
There, while the wind dies,
  Weary of wrath ;
Cloudless the calm skies
  Beam on each path.

Warble of song-bird,
  Budding of leaf,
Like some beloved word,
  Hushes our grief ;
Down of the thistle,
  Foam of the sea,
Where the winds whistle,
  There would I be !

Twilight.

Shall I see her at the gate,
Twilight falling in a mist,
With her dark eyes, like a fate,
And the brow I oft have kissed?

In the lattice, where a light
Flickereth ever to and fro,
Shineth there her presence bright,
Soundeth there, her voice so low?

Do the footsteps that I hear,
Through the hall and on the stair,
Bring that music to my ear
That her very footsteps bear?

* * *

Foolish fancy!—useless pain!
Never will she ope the door,
Nor that voice be known again,
Nor the look her features wore.

Not for thee the flickering gleam,
Not for thee, the footsteps gay;
Love is but a broken dream,
Vanished in the twilight grey.

Shall I see her at the gate,
Twilight falling in a mist?
—*Twilight.*

An Exile From Home.

The sky is all aglow with rosy light,
And slowly sinking sets the golden sun;
While sea-birds homeward take their silent flight,
For us, for them, the lingering day is done.

In wanderings far, wherever I may roam,
Though fair the scene and mild the favored clime,
My heart is yearning for the distant home
That brings back memories of a happier time.

The surging sea has sorrow in its voice,
And through the forest moans the restless wind,
Nor can this gorgeous tropic sky rejoice
The thought that clings to dear ones left behind.

The glossy orange-tree, with perfumed flower,
Guards, 'mid protecting leaves, her balls of gold;
But I remember me as fair a bower,
Where birds, in blended joy, their concert hold.

Sweet home! how distant from my tearful gaze,
What years must lapse ere I behold thee more;
Or sit beside the hearthstone's ample blaze,
Or meet glad welcome at the open door!

The cherished dead lie buried far away,
No longer visited by step of mine ;—
Thou, dearest ! couched 'mid rocks, moss-grown and grey,
Would that my weary head were laid by thine !

Thy trial and thy conflict all are past,
For thee life's ever-varying course is run,
Thou'rt safe in that most happy home, at last,
And Earth may well be lost when Heaven is won.

Around thy grave the clustering cedars bend,
And sloping downward, fields and woods are green ;
While far beyond, the distant mountains lend
A soft enchantment to the pensive scene.

The brook that babbles near, the livelong day,
The orchard flushed with bloom of pearly white,
Seem none less fair than this magnolia gay,
Lifting her buds of interwoven light.

Brighter to me, the violet, born of spring,
Than gilded Jasmine of this summer-land ;
Not e'en the Cardinal's crimson-painted wing
So dear as the blithe Swallow's twittering band.

Sweet home ! O, once again to press thy shore,
O, faces that I love, once more to see !—
How vain to hope the past we can restore,
Or build of shattered time, eternity !

The Humming-Bird.

Tell me, bright bird, with diamond crest,
Where weavest thou thine airy nest?
'Mid what enchanted solitude
Repose thy little fairy brood?—
Thy coat of mail, all flecked with gold,
No richer graced brave knight of old.

Thou hovering spark of living light,
Quick flashing past our wondering sight,—
Thy crown, now with the emerald gleams,
Now kindles with the ruby's beams;
Thou roamest through the scented bowers,
A star, amid adoring flowers.

What far-off region gave thee birth?—
Thou waif, too fragile for our earth!
And where, 'mid blossoms hung away,
Hide all thy nestlings, at their play?
Titania, in her woodland sport,
Ne'er held, than thee, more regal court.

One dazzling instant thou art here,
To vanish like a smile or tear;
A hint of worlds beyond our gaze,
A glance of Eden's mystic days;
To thy beloved, supremely true,
Speed thee away!—fair bird, adieu!

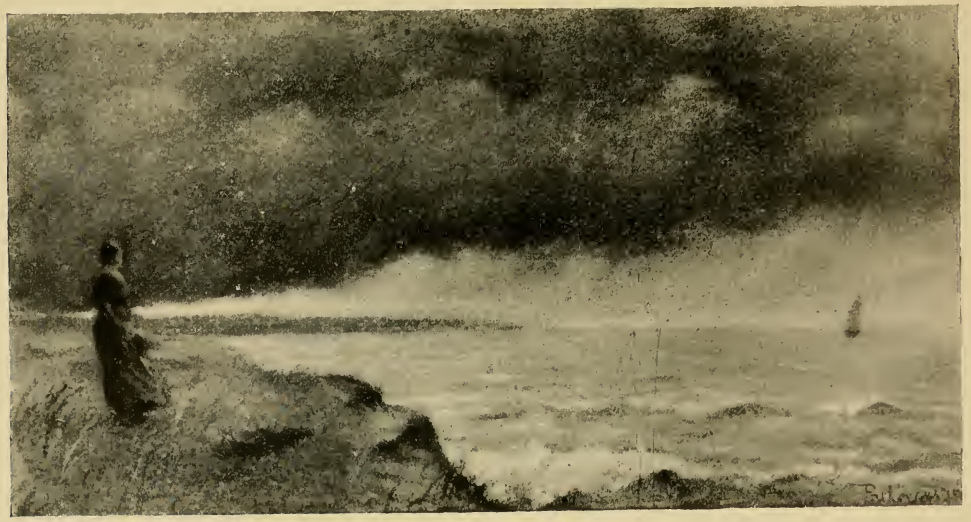
Phœbe and Philemon.

In hammock reclining,
The vines round her twining,
Dear Phœbe is sleeping,
Her eyes wet with weeping ;
But the saddest of days slips away.

The world all forgetting,—
His absence regretting
Whose love is so fleeting,
Who recks not her greeting ;
But the slowest of days slips away.

In arbour all hidden
Come footsteps unbidden ;
They linger,—approach,—
Pursue and encroach ;
While the dullest of days slips away.

For hither, repenting,
Philemon relenting,
Steals to her garden,
Sues for her pardon ;
And the gladdest of days slips away.



For he to distant shores has steered his bark,
While she is left, to count the lonely hours.

—*Nantucket Surf-Side.*

Nantucket Surf-Side.

A varying coast, with smoothly shining sand,
A surf that breaks in thunder on the shore,
Where Neptune's coursers, racing toward the land,
Wave their white manes amid the ocean's roar.

From far-off lands what tidings bring ye here,
Ye waves, that hither speed with giant surge?
What vessel have ye wrecked, in wild career?
What tell ye of the stranded seaman's dirge?

With shuddering crest of rainbow hues, erect,
Poised for an instant, chafing in mid-air,
A crash replies, and all the beach is flecked
With iridescent foam, spread like a snare;

Or like the sparkling jewels of a crown
That some fair mermaid flings from pearly caves,
Herself safe hidden countless fathoms down,
The joyous plaything of the winds and waves.

What tales of buried treasure couldst thou tell,
Resistless sea, so mighty in thy wrath!
What cargoes of the Orient, with a knell
Of anguish, merged beneath the storm-king's path!

On this lone cliff, that holds the floods at bay,
Perchance some youthful lovers may have sate,
And watched the heaving billows fling their spray,
In golden moments snatched from bitter fate.

For he to distant shores has steered his bark,
While she is left, to count the lonely hours;
To dream of him each day from dawn till dark,
And gather in life's thistles, not its flowers.

O sea! forbear such faithful hearts to rend!
Wreck not their hopes, though far the wand'rer roam;
Ye watery sprites, to him your magic lend,
And waft him safely to his island home.

To a Musician.

In shadowy glades, where overhead
Thick boughs are tangled,
And songs of hidden, fluttering birds
Are sweetly jangled ;
Where all the tufts of grass are starred
With violets blue,—
Flower of all flowers the dearest type
Of hearts proved true ;
There have I lain and lost myself
In pleasant dreaming,
While butterflies, like autumn leaves,
Flew o'er me, gleaming.
O, when thy music, siren-like,
Had me enchanted,
Those lone and shadowy glades of youth
Once more I haunted ;
'Mid violets fell the golden drops
Of sunlight, down,
While round thy head a halo shone,
A golden crown ;
And all the forest birds were hushed
While hearing thee,
Flowers shed their perfume, silent grew
The humming bee.
O, may thy life be like thy gladdest
Theme of song !—
A stream that sweeps melodiously
Its banks along.

Gretchen.

In Sunday garments of the best,
I wandered by the gladsome Rhone ;
Who cometh now to break my rest,
When I would fain be all alone ?
'Tis Gretchen !—I'll have nought of thee,
In spite of thy beguiling ways ;
Thy vain attempt to capture me,
Like Undine and her sister fays.

I heed no more the shy surprise
That lights thy face at my approach ;
Nor e'en those pensive, downcast eyes,
That bear a look of mild reproach ;
Thou playest with each hope, each fear,
My safety lies in footsteps fleet,
I'm proof against each smile, each tear,
No longer suppliant at thy feet.

We pass, without a spoken word,
Life's path henceforth to tread apart ;
My pulses are with anguish stirred,
Love's arrow has transfixed my heart ;
She stands confused, a moment, then,
And seats her by the river's brink ;
I venture once to look again,—
She leans upon her hand, to think ;—

The slender hand I pushed aside
  Supports the paleness of her face ;
How could I miss the mark so wide,
  Unmindful of her worth and grace !
" Forget,—forgive !—'twas but a test ;
  Yes, Gretchen, thee I love alone ! "—
In Sunday garments of the best,
  We wandered by the gladsome Rhone.

The Deserted Home.

(*St. Augustine.*)

'Tis a vision of other days !—
A path through a tangled wood
Of laurel and scented bays,
Where a low-roofed cottage stood ;
The red-bird flew to his nest
Close under the sheltering eaves,
And the turtle-dove sought her rest
'Mid the dew of the mulberry leaves.

And all through the starry night
The whipporwill sang his lay,
Till the grandeur of dawning light
Ushered in the effulgence of day :
Then, high through the golden mist
Soared the cranes, like a silent dream,
On the way to their favourite tryst,
Where the sea gives its wealth to the stream.

'Tis a vision of other hours,
As fair as the ocean spray,
As bright as the passion flowers
That bloomed where the footpath lay ;
They hear not !—alas ! ne'er again
May we meet at the welcoming door,
Where the carol of fluttering wren,
And the mocking-bird's song outpour.

The footsteps that marked the sand,
'Neath the rippling wavelets hide ;
Each trace of that household band
Swept away by the surging tide ;
And the voices with joyous call
That rang through the tangled wood,
Their echoes no longer fall
Where the low-roofed cottage stood.

The Wild Duck.

A wavering line of black, floats in the cove ;
The ducks from Arctic clime already rove ;
And some will swim, and some will hovering fly,
Unmindful of the dark, tempestuous sky ;
And in their swiftest flight, most venturous course,
They heed not threatening winds, with accents hoarse.

These feathered squadrons, drifting through the air,
Or those the crested wave serenely bear,—
Between opposing groups their sentinels fly,
To ward off danger, should a foe be nigh ;
In yonder bay what myriad flocks take form,
And cry a joyous welcome to the storm !

They revel hold, with winds that wildest blow ;
Their pulses beat with ocean's ebb and flow ;
The creeping mist comes now, to shroud the scene,
And whirling snowflakes fall with glittering sheen ;
While Coatue's coast its icy boundary hides,—
Where through the summer days, the cactus bides.

Now calm, now storm ; each have in turn, their play ;
And we, the creatures of too brief a day,
Look outward, ever, as through magic glass,
To scan the changing visions as they pass ;
While nature glories in her mystic power,
Gleams in the iceberg—blushes in the flower.

Summer Rain.

In the silence of the night,
When the wind was hushed to rest,
Seagulls resting from their flight,
On the beach, by waves caressed ;
Drop by drop, the shower came,
Falling on the window-pane,
Like faint crackling of a flame,
Welcome sound of summer rain !

Coy at first, the shower fell,—
Then a deluge !—'mid the crash
Of the thunder's bursting shell,
And the lightning's vivid flash :
While the greensward woke from sleep,
And the flowers held up their heads,
Starting from their slumber deep,
In their parched and sterile beds.

Blessings on the falling rain !
Fevered lips are moistened now ;
Broken is the baleful chain
Pressed so long on aching brow :
Morn will bring the thrush's song,
Where the spring its bank o'erflows,
There will hovering blackbirds throng,
Waking from their night's repose.

Nantucket Cliff.

High on a cliff, o'erlooking land and sea,
A cottage, vine-clad, wooes the summer skies;
The robins freely give their minstrelsy,
The meadow-lark from hidden covert flies.

The hay-fields, ripening, waft their fragrant breath,
In verdant contrast with the sea's vast deep;
And here the farmer gleans the aftermath,
And there the white-sailed shallops glide or sleep.

How silver-toned the distant village bell,
That rings the matin and the vesper chime!
Like blissful dream, the lingering sounds that tell
The onward flight of swift-eluding time.

O, days so brightly blest, so amply crowned;
O, nights where ocean breezes blandly play!
Could way-worn pilgrim better shrine have found
Than where the sea-tern takes her devious way?

Though storms, ere long, may dark above them lower,
Yet He who guides the bird through mist and foam,
Will not forget to shelter with His power
The happy dwellers in their island home.

Lines Written in an Album.

(*Freiburg in Breisgau.*)

When from distant lands returning,
Home the wanderer comes once more,
Often will remembrance kindle,
Dreaming of a foreign shore ;
Of sequestered forest pathways,
Of the châlet, like a nest,—
Of the happy, forest peasant,
Loving rudest home the best ;
Of the sculptured Münster's tower,
Crowning gem of Freiburg's town,
And the vineyards of the Schlossberg,
Where the woods look smiling down ;
And of friendship's ties that strengthen,
Though vast leagues between us lengthen.

Frederica to Goethe.

Good bye ! I ne'er shall thee behold again !
Thy fate leads outward, far beyond my ken ;
I hear no more the accents that entrance,
Nor feel the benediction of thy glance ;
Such darkness comes, my soul to overwhelm,
My journey goes amiss in this world's realm.

How gladly would I plead my poor behest !
'Tis from a heart that e'er loved thee the best,—
That thou for me couldst heave one pitying sigh,
In hours when dearer, fairer ones are nigh ;
And in the triumph of thy worldly fame,
Breathe to thyself a tribute to my name !

Sleep would I covet, could I have the boon,
In fancy still to rove, 'neath pensive moon,
As once so oft, together we have strayed,
Through vale and upland, and o'er velvet glade ;
For what to some might seem an idle dream,
Brings to my quickened sense the rainbow's gleam.

I fain would hear the voice that others hear,
I fain would cheer the heart that others cheer ;
And though thy presence lights no more my way,
'Twill lead, God willing, to that perfect day,
When earthly darkness shall no more enfold :
Good bye !—thy face again I shall behold !

Boats at anchor lie,
In their port so sure.
—*October.*

October.

Anchored by the sea !—
  Waters chafe and roar ;
Winds they whistle free,
  On the sullen shore.

Trembles in the blast
  Branch of leafy bower ;—
Clouds have burst, at last,
  In a sudden shower !

Aster's purple hue
  Brightens dusky glade ;
Birds that lightly flew
  Seek some distant shade.

Grey the dreary sky,
  Grey the ocean deep ;
Save where flecks of foam
  O'er the shallows leap.

Boats at anchor lie,
  In their port so sure ;
We the storm defy !—
  In His hand secure.

Sunrise.

The red sun hung, like a ball of fire,
Hung low between sea and sky,
With the sullen blaze of a funeral-pyre,
While my love went sailing by.

The breeze coquetted with each fair leaf
Of the feathery clematis-vine,
And the honeysuckle, with golden sheaf,
Dripped with the sea-fog's brine.

That white-winged boat, like a bird it flew,
On its wandering voyage bent ;
The placid sky to the ocean's blue
Its smile and its gladness lent.

Ill-omened and red, up rose the sun,—
Farewell to that bark so frail,
With its devious journey scarce begun,
And its bold, adventurous sail !

My life was dimmed in its early dawn,
And I knew, through my tearful gaze,
That youth's fair vision of love was gone,
Blotted out in the purple haze.

Forefathers' Burying Ground.

(*Nantucket.*)

Exiles, our staunch forefathers came,
To tread the paths of island chiefs;
They ventured through the treacherous reefs,
Where sunsets gleam with amber flame.

The red man kindly welcome gave,
And housed them in his cabin rude,
Nor grudged to share the solitude,
Environed by stern ocean's wave.

Slowly the cycles have revolved,
Since with their mother-earth they sleep,
Where tangled vines in fragrance creep,
For them life's dubious problem solved.

The bay-leaf and the brier-rose
Hold guard above their sylvan bed,
And dewy tears of perfume shed,
To add a balm to their repose.

The Mocking-Bird.

Bird of the summer-land, blithest and best,
Rapture breathes forth from each swell of thy voice;
Softly thou singest the tired one to rest,—
Morning awakes thee, his heart to rejoice.

Where the gay jessamine perfumes the air,
Trailing from tree to tree blossoms of gold;
Where the wild rabbit retreats to his lair,
Echoes thy melody through wood and wold.

Casting his net in the smooth-flowing tide,
The fisherman lingers, to drink in thy strain;
Dropping the oar, the fair youth by his side,
Dreamily marks the delicious refrain.

Not to the palm-tree thou wendest thy way,
Too stately a dwelling for poets like thee;
'Mid bloom of the myrtle thou greetest the day,
Or bidst it adieu from the pomegranate-tree.

Weaving the songs of all rivals in one,
Mocking the oriole—calling the lark,—
Bobolink too, in the contest outrun;
And even the owl, hooting shrill in the dark.

Often perched high on some towering spray,
Glad in each turn and each trill of thy song,—
Upward ecstatic, thou wingest thy way,
Such moments of rapturous bliss to prolong.

Rising and falling, like storm-beaten ship,
Madly careering in circlets of sound,—
Soaring up heavenward, downward to dip,
Spent with sweet passion, at length, to the ground.

Whether in sunshine or balmiest shade,
Grove of the orange or pine-forest wild,
Chanting thy notes, with emotion o'erweighed,
Crowned thou must be, music's favorite child.

Joy of the exile, and light of his home!
Singing of hope, where all else were despair;
Teaching the wanderer, though far he may roam,
God sendeth angels of love everywhere.

Before the Storm.

In boding murmur, sea appeals to sky,
With dirge prophetic of a tempest nigh ;
In sullen wrath it sweeps along the shore,
And brings an echo of the past, once more ;
The Undine of the wave awakes from sleep,
In grottoed chambers, 'neath translucent deep ;
While billows sudden rise, with airy vault,
Where yonder rocks repel the rough assault.

In boisterous conflict, now they wend their way,
And storm the coast with thunder and with spray :
The billowy sand receives the billowy sea,—
One kiss—one warm embrace—then sets it free ;
While golden-rod leans o'er the arid ledge,
To flaunt her beauty, 'mid the waving sedge ;
And sups Lethean cordial of the brine,
That flings o'er all a drowsiness divine.

Once more the surging waters tower on high ;
Then, drinking in all light of sea and sky,
Nearer and nearer glides the imprisoned wave,
Gorgeous with jewels of Aladdin's cave ;
It falls, in fan of coral, on the beach,
Or hastes, in tawny streamlets, far to reach ;
Then, mingling with its native ocean spray,
Returns erewhile, to mingle with the fray.

This tiny shell that glitters in the sand,
Bears witness to the same omniscient Hand
That holds both wind and wave in stern control,
And bids the stars in spheric orbits roll ;
The fragile tenant lived its span,—then died,
Just as it must to you and me betide ;
Memento may we leave, that one shall say,
" Here lies, who acted well his little day ! "

Reverie.

To feel the sunshine of thine eye,
  To hear the music of thy voice,
A strain of mirth—perchance a sigh—
  'Tis like the spring, when birds rejoice.

But yet should Fate with stern decree
  Blot out the vision I adore,
What refuge would be left for me
  When thy dear face I saw no more?

'Mid storms of March, 'mid blooms of May,
  All changes ever found thee true;
Ah! would that I might lead the way,
  And be the first to say adieu!

To a Night-Blooming Cereus.

The day was calmly closing,
Night held ethereal reign,
When slowly oped thy petals,
Thou pearl without a stain!

O dove, with softest plumage,
And gently-folded wings,
Whence comes the charm, resistless,
Thy perfumed presence brings?

'Twas stolen from the snowflake,
Thy purity of light;
Thine alabaster leaflets
Are tremulously bright.

Not Solomon, transcendent,
In all his glory crowned,
E'er shown in robe so regal,
E'er shed such radiance round.

Half-hid, like threads of silver,
Thy stamens clustering lie;
A nest, where love-lorn fairy
Might breathe an elfin sigh.

Alas ! with stroke of midnight
  Thy transient life is o'er !—
Thy subtle beauty, ebbing,
  We may behold no more.

Thus perish from earth's pathways
  The joys too frail to last,
The hopes that lack fruition,
  Those blossoms of the past.

Where ivy climbed and roses grew,
When time was young and life was new.

—*The Oldest House.*

The Oldest House.

(*Nantucket.*)

Through storm, through calm, we see it stand,
Like some old wreck upon the strand,
That calmly waits the event of fate,
Like those who no more love or hate;
And only in a pensive mood
Can we invade this solitude.

How sadly grim that lone abode,
Where once the yeoman reaped and sowed!
It seems to warn, who ventures near,
To shun those walls, moss-grown and drear;
Where ivy climbed and roses grew,
When time was young and life was new.

The sky how overcast it seems!—
We stand amid a land of dreams;
What ghostly presence there may dwell,
O, who may know and who may tell?—
To linger in deserted hall,
To hide behind yon mouldering wall!

No bee about the clover hums,
No smoke from out the chimney comes;
No busy feet the threshold cross,
Nor aught disturbs the gathering moss
That clings to shingle and to stain;—
No hand uplifts the window-pane.

Here babes have first beheld the light,
Here souls have passed to death's dark night ;
Here joy was once a frequent guest,
Here friendship's hand was closely pressed ;
'Tis only meet to drop a tear,
For those who once found life so dear !

Apple-Blossoms.

Where the apple-blossoms fling
Spicy odours in the spring,
There the robin loves to dwell,
With his flute-like trill and swell ;
Lost in labyrinth of green,
Chanting sonnets to his queen.

Mocking-bird, with song of love,
Charms the fragrant orange-grove,
Birds of tropic plumage gay
'Mid sequestered thickets play ;
But the rugged apple-tree
Boasts a rival minstrelsy.

Pearly blossoms drink the dew
Fresh from heaven's ethereal blue ;
Dusky boughs conceal the nest
Where the little fledglings rest,
Till their tender wings have grown,
Bearing them to realms unknown.

Cowslip, clover, columbine,
Clematis, with tendrils fine,
Arbutus, and maiden-hair,
All are loved and all are fair ;
But the apple-blossoms bring
Sweetest odours of the spring.

Nantucket in Winter.

The sun in his glory sank low in the west,
With rose and with amber resplendent in light,
While the moon showed her delicate face in the east,
The queen that in majesty reigns o'er the night.

They smiled at each other across the earth's face,
Across the wide stretch of the land and the sea ;
And the sun said farewell, with a shimmering grace,
To the moon, that in coldness a statue might be.

There was snow on the plains, with the grass piercing through,
And decking the shore was a network of frost ;
Like a cobweb of lace in its beauty it grew,
From the foam, that the sea had so heedlessly tossed.

So glittered the sun and so smiled the cold moon,
Such grandeur ethereal flamed up in the west,—
So softer than ermine the snow-covered dune,
That the ocean grew still, in a rapturous rest.

Fairy lakes sequestered.
—*Nantucket Moors.*

Nantucket Moors.

Here are pines for perfume,
  Golden-rods and fern ;
Briers, with their berries,
  That like the ruby burn ;
Meadow-larks for music,
  Fluttering to their nest ;
'Mid the grass and heather
  Sit we here to rest.

Here are lakes for brightness
  Wondrous in their hue ;
Fairy lakes sequestered,
  With only me and you.
On the wing are sea-gulls ;
  The hawk soars high for prey ;
In the sedgy hollows
  The marsh-wren hides away.

You and I for comrades,
  On heath so weird and wild ;
Ocean billows surging,
  Where sunset clouds are piled ;
How each path enchanted
  Wooes us to return ;
Scented with the brier,
  And perfumed with the fern !

List the dwarf-pine sighing,
  Hear the larks complain !
'Tis the hour of parting,
  And parting means but pain.
Farewell, bird and blossom,
  Farewell, flower and vine !
Ah ! what grief to sever
  Such hearts as mine and thine !

On hearing William Mason Play a Sonata of Beethoven.

Sweet tones! how swift ye take your flight?—
Like elves that flee the dawn of light;
Like flowers that bloom, and blooming fade,
Ere we, their beauty, have surveyed.

To faint with this delicious pain,
And listening, never wake again,—
Thus sighs the heart, in blissful dream,
While flows the music's rippling stream.

Where Billows Foam.

Hark to the thunder of the ocean's roar !—
  Where silvery foam leaps upward to the sky,
And with a wild embrace invades the shore,
  And sweeps along the sands with Titan's cry.

'Tis but the echo of the eternal voice,
  That stirs the soul to sympathy of tears ;
Or once more gives it courage to rejoice,
  As pass before it all the vanished years.

Iris is hovering, with her rainbow arch,
  Illusive gleaming through the feathery spray ;
And mingling with the waves' triumphal march,
  The Nereids in their misty splendour play.

Ah ! could they summon from the tragic deep,
  The face that pensive memory loves so well !—
How would the heart with sudden rapture leap,
  While lips would smile, where smiles have ceased to dwell.

Oh, spirit of mid-air !—of crystal wave !—
  Bring back the wayward wanderer to his home ;
Nor let him linger in enchanted cave,
  Where mermaids revel and where billows foam.

Bereft.

The shadow that falls from this ancient house
Is a heavy shadow and drear ;
The roof is green with the gathered moss
Of many a busy year,—
And the walls are echoing what they have heard,
But never again may hear.

O, lonely rooms ! how ye conjure up
Those groups of the young and the fair ;
And her in their midst, with her thrilling eyes,
And her sun-enkindled hair ;
Ye bring me once more her magic voice,
And the garments she used to wear.

O, desolate rooms ! ye could tell of joys,
Glancing bright as the meteor's gleam,
When her radiant face turned your gloom to light,
As a beacon-fire gilds the stream ;
All is darkness now, while I stand alone,
'Mid the wreck of a beautiful dream.

I have crossed the threshold,—farewell, old house !
Thou didst welcome my glad, young bride ;
Life opened to us like a fairy path,
Where no sorrowing could betide ;
Brief bliss—brief hope—like a frosted flower,
In her sunniest bloom she died.

The Portuguese Bell.

(*Nantucket.*)

In Brant Point's lighthouse tower am I,
And here I watch the coming storm ;
Fantastic clouds go flitting by,
Aërial sprites in legions swarm ;
While floating over ford and fell,
Drift echoes of the curfew-bell.

Full seventy years are past and gone,
Since journeyed from a foreign shore,
The bell that welcomes in each dawn,
That plaintive sings the day is o'er ;
With benison of sounds, that tell
All hearts, it is the curfew-bell.

And while it chants its evening hymn,
A song of love,—a sweet refrain ;
The village lights will soon be dim,
That gleam from every window-pane ;
As if in answer to the swell
Of silver-throated curfew-bell.

In Lisbon was its metal cast ;
Those occult harmonies that ring,
When stroke by stroke they ply it fast,
Swarm forth like birds on eager wing ;
Tis fit for jubilee or knell,
For matin or for curfew-bell.

The village lights will soon be dim,
That gleam from every window pane.

—*The Portuguese Bell.*

When winter's ice encircles round
  The cresent outline of our isle ;
When summer's rhythmic waves resound
  Along the coast for many a mile ;
Alike, its well-known accents tell,
How faithful is our curfew-bell.

And when no more I light the flame
  That glitters over land and sea,—
What matter though I leave no name ;
  Perhaps no friend, to weep for me ?—
'Twill surely chime a last farewell,
To one who loved the curfew-bell.

The Old Figure-Head.

(*Nantucket.*)

Once on a time, athwart the sea,
Sped I through the billows free ;
Sought the distant, dim Azores,
Touched upon Egyptian shores ;
While above, the albatross
Flew where ocean currents cross.

From her path our ship outborne,
Stress of wind careened, one morn ;
Bravely strove the undaunted crew,
As she plunged the vortex through :—
Eyes have wept, that watched the main,
Seeking their return in vain.

O, the tempest wild that flung
All its terrors o'er that throng !—
Crash of thunder, splintered mast,
Bulwarks shivered,—till the last
Hope was gone ; the whirlpool wide
Raging in abysmal tide !

Caverned Styx engulfed its dead,
Wreckage all the coast o'erspread ;
On a sea-girt isle I stand,
Rescued from the shifting strand ;
But yon pathway 'mid the foam,
Ne'er again 'tis mine to roam.

Would it were my happier fate
Still to sail in queenly state,
Cleaving swift the up-heaving brine,
Where the sportive dolphin shine ;
That at last my rest might be
Far beneath the boundless sea !

Ysaÿe,

The Belgian Violinist.

Songs melodious of birds, how they suddenly thrill
And vibrate through our being, and hold us at will !—
How a subtle refrain of the viol or harp
Can sway sceptre, and rule o'er the spirit, with sharp
Scintillations and shocks of a tempest of sound,
Dim forebodings, keen joys, in a rapid rebound !

'Tis only the hand of a master enthrals,
As with sweep of the strings, he his Ariel calls,
And with musical message, now sadness, now mirth,
Him sends on swift pinions to circle the earth ;
But the gnomes and the elves that so close round him throng,
Burn like moths, when he lists, in the flame of his song.

Thus we revel in magical cadence, whose gift
Is the burden and penance of care to uplift ;
Soothed by sigh of the forest, when night drops her pall,
Hushed by cry of the torrent's precipitous fall,
Lulled by voice of the sea, on an island's lone shore,
Cheered by carol of birds, where the tropic rains pour.

Consolation.

Ill-presaged winds are blowing,
Perchance in terror strewing
The ocean, with their wrecks ;
Grim powers of ill combining,
Like pythons subtly twining,
The nether world to vex.

For shelter fled the swallow,
And quick the curlews follow,
In swiftest flight abashed ;
White foam and clouds embracing,
The shore's outline effacing,
With maddened billows lashed.

How oft in darkness groping,
With adverse forces coping,
The heart well nigh despairs !—
Nor notes the dark cloud shifting,
The storm-rack onward drifting,
That weighed it down with cares.

On Him cast ye your burden
Who grants each cherished guerdon,
And hushes every grief ;
He heeds the sparrow falling,
Discerns thy slightest calling,—
Fail not in Him, belief !

The stress of sorrow, ceasing,
Shall yet bring glad releasing,
Fair skies again will glow ;
And souls to whom 'tis given
To issue join with Heaven,
Shall consolation know.

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